

SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS
Minutes of Grasslands Naturalists Board Meeting
June 1, 2021
Police Point Park

Present: Phil Horch (Chair), Betty Rainville (Secretary), Hugh Armstrong, Eileen Cowtan, Ian and Angela Turner.

Absent: Linda Fisher

1. Call to Order: 1:40 pm
2. Review of GN Skype Board Minutes from May 4, 2021.
It was suggested that the word "audited" be changed to "reviewed" in **Reports.5.a.** under Treasurer's Report in the May 4 Draft Board Minutes.
Also in **5.a.** "Hugh agreed to act as one auditor", was changed to "Hugh agreed to help check the financial records".
Under **Reports, 5.i.** "Hugh also reported that \$2,500.00 was received..." is changed to "**will be** provided from the City for purchase of posts for the Scenic Views Project".
Moved that Minutes were then Adopted. **CARRIED.**
3. Additions to the Agenda:
 - a. **City's new Environment, Land, and Government Relations:** Phil shared Gerry Ehler's email of May 27 announcing this new department formed to provide direction to other City departments in matters of the environment. Gerry's email noted, "This will include the development of stewardship principles that will apply to planning and development in the city". Gerry proposed that he be the GN contact person working with the Director, Kevin Redden, in matters of the city drafting a set of stewardship principles and related matters.
Phil has asked Gerry to find out the mandate of the new department. Gerry will update Phil and the Board on outcomes, as information becomes available.
 - b. **Scenic Views-GN Consent Forms for photos:** Paul emailed the Board on May 31 to explain sending an interim draft of a consent form for non-members that Gerry urgently needed for the Scenic Views promotional photos. Paul had asked for comments or suggestions from Gerry and Governance Committee members.
It was Moved that the draft of the photo consent form for non-members that Paul Thibault drew up, be accepted by the Board. **CARRIED**
 - c. **Governance Committee Policies and Procedures Approval:** These P&P's and MHIP Operations Committee Terms of Reference were posted in the May 2021 Chronicle for member viewing and comments. Approval-in-principle was given to these revisions at the May 4 Board meeting (Reports 5.g)
Moved that the proposed changes by the Governance Committee to the GN Policies and Procedures and the MHIP Operations Committee Terms of Reference, be approved by the Board. **CARRIED**
4. Action Items:
 - a. **Upcoming AGM Date, Nomination Info., Venue etc.:** The Board discussed the uncertainty of an AGM on June 22, as proposed previously. Member registration prior to the AGM was considered as a possible solution, with a 20 member attendance limit imposed by current COVID restrictions.
It was eventually decided to hold a Board meeting Tuesday, August 31, with an AGM to be held **Tuesday, September 14, 2021.** With Milt's approval, the September Chronicle would be available for updated member viewing by September 8th or 9th.
Angela will talk to John and Hugh this week about reviewing the financial books for the end of 2020, prior to the AGM.
 - b. **Climate Change Symposium:** Phil reported that he plans to start meetings with the Steering Committee in September 2021 after the AGM. Welcome to Brooke Kapeller who has joined the committee.
The goal of the Symposium, Phil explained, is to help the average working Medicine Hat and area resident, as well as students, to see what the future will look like. It needs to be well promoted to these two groups.
Phil recommended these two books: A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency by Seth Klein, as well as How to Avoid a Climate Disaster by Bill Gates.
 - c. **Irrigation:** Phil noted that we need to keep monitoring this topic and be alert for news in our area.
Board members see Irrigation Project Meeting Notes from Cheryl Bradly dated May 20, 2021.
 - d. **Community Spirit Awards:** Phil reported that both John Slater and Gerry Ehler have graciously agreed to their nominations for the Community Spirit awards. Martha submitted the Nomination forms to the City for the category of Environment Award to Gerry Ehler. Thank you to Martha and to everyone who contributed to John and Gerry's nomination submission.
Martha Munz Gue's name has also been submitted for nomination by SEAWA for an Award of Excellence with the Community Spirit Awards.

- e. **Face Mark Litter Project:** Phil reported (email April 22) that Gerry sent the article written by Paula Munro and himself, to the Medicine Hat News for publishing.

5. Reports:

- a. **Treasurer's Report:** Angela and Eileen. Angela asked if the Casino bank account be changed to the Crescent Heights Branch. She noted that she is currently not on the Casino list for co-signing authority. Angela submitted the Profit and Loss sheet for May 2021. Total GN 'Club' **Income** for this period was \$335.00. Total Expenses of \$266.20 leave a Net Income of \$68.00 for May 2021. Angela reported the 'Club' **Savings** Account stands at \$16,596.03 as of May 31, 2021 and the GN **Chequing** Account Balance is \$6,127.91. Total Chequing/Savings with shares is \$22,725.29. **Total Assets**, including GST Receivable, comes to \$22,767.24.

Eileen noted the **MHIP** balance as of today is \$265,053.13

- b. **Membership:** Eileen noted there are 68 memberships today. This is a combination of families and individuals and does not indicate each family member.
- c. **Correspondence:** Angela reported no correspondence for GN at the Nature Centre location.
- d. **MHIP Operations:** Hugh reported that 9 individuals have applied for the position of Chief Interpreter and Assistant Chief Interpreter which is open until June 1. Bob Townsend, Corlaine, and Hugh will hold interviews next month for final selection. Hugh noted that the Operations Committee will hold a meeting June 21.
- e. **Issues Committee:** Martha and John.(see Addendum at the end of these Minutes)
- f. **Budget Committee:** No Report.
- g. **Governance Committee:** Paul (see Addition to Agenda item 3c.above).
- h. **Indoor Committee:** No Report. The Board discussed various methods of delivering speaker presentations, which are becoming more common. These include webinars, such as an upcoming Bat presentation in the June Native Prairie Speaker Series, reported by Ian.
- i. **Fund Raising Committee:** Hugh reported receiving \$3,800.00 from Alberta Ecotrust Foundation for the Scenic Views project. \$2,500.00 is coming from the City of Medicine Hat, Parks and Recreation.
- j. **Field Trip Committee:** John/Martha: With the size permitted for outdoor gatherings increased to 10 again, Phil noted that we are resuming outdoor birding field trips with a maximum of 10 people, staying socially distanced, and with no car-pooling. Neighbourhood walks are now allowing 10 people in one group.
- k. **Communications Committee:** Angela will drop off GN information at the Cypress County Office. Ian and Angela said they will investigate Zoom as a possible option for a number of members to attend the AGM.
- l. **Birding Trails:** Phil reported that he delivered about 22 books to Dinosaur Provincial Park Visitor Centre.
- m. **Bird Tales:** Hugh for Dee Armstrong and Paul Thibault. No report because of current visiting restrictions for volunteers at South Country Senior Residence.
- n. **Nature Alberta:** Brooke Kapeller. Nothing to report this month.

6. Other Business:

- a. **Report on FGN, Future Ground Network:** Ian Turner reported that one goal of FGN is to group members with a single volunteer. Resilient.SEA, a local group, is also a member of FGN. He noted the next step is to find more than one contact person. It was suggested that Ian talk to Martha Munz Gue since she is knowledgeable about FGN. Ian mentioned that FGN offers instruction on the learning tool, SLACK, which local group Climate Conversation already uses.
- b. **Student Art and Design Proposal:** Phil reported he will contact Lanette Williams, MH College student, again, to explain the potential for a non-profit group like GN, to benefit from the design services offered by the Arts and Design proposal. (See Board Min. of May 4 item 3.2.Addition to Agenda). Board members had suggested that the Scenic Views project might welcome such input.
- c. **Methanex CAP Meeting:** As a member of the Methanex Community Advisory Panel, Ian reported on what Methanex is doing from a climate point of view. He said Methanex works in a number of areas to improve their carbon footprint. Different plant locations vary procedures, Ian noted. Some U.S plant sites near municipal landfills are certified to use methane captured from waste breakdown. Improvements at the MH plant last fall, allow it to inject more carbon dioxide, from the nearby Air Liquide facility, into its production line to cut down on emissions. Between 2012 and 2020, Methanex contributed approximately \$1.1 million in donations to 90 charitable and not-for-profit organizations in Medicine Hat. Ian reported he has signed on for 2 more years as a member of the panel.

- d. **Ben Velner:** Board members were saddened to hear of Ben's unexpected passing yesterday, May 31. Ben was a lifetime member of Grasslands Naturalists Society and will be deeply missed. Board members discussed the importance of putting an article about Ben in the upcoming Chronicle.
- e. **Next Board Meeting:** August 31 at 7:00 pm at Hugh and Annalora's house.
- f. **Motion to Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:37 pm. **CARRIED**

ADDENDUM to Board Minutes of June 1, 2021

GN Issues Committee Report June 2, 2021 from Martha Munz Gue.

FOR BOARD DISCUSSION AND DECISION:

1. **River Riparian Areas.** The Adopt a Pond initiative is ready to spill over into the riparian areas along the river. Would GN adopt the paths along both sides of the river? Will a few of the GN Board and committee members like to take a specific stretch along the river to monitor and love, by visiting the same stretch every week or two? And then invite one or two others to do the same? Volunteers can name where and how much of the river riparian area they would like to visit regularly. Mostly the volunteers would stay on the city paths, except when retrieving trash or examining a species.
2. **Irrigation Expansion.** Would GN like to participate in an on-line discussion group (perhaps 3 or 4? sessions and then decide whether more time is needed to clarify positions and possibilities).
3. **Generating a list of young adults** and teens that might wish to help with "Special Days" planning.

THE BROAD VIEW:

Stewardship of Grasslands including coulees and riparian areas in and near the city

The "Scenic Views" project is underway. Pictures of the great views from 20 vantage points in the city will be coupled with stewardship messages, and close-ups of the complex plant communities that make up the grasslands. Ger Ehlert is leading. Stewardship signs will be mounted at some of the "scenic views" viewing locations, for which we have a grant from EcoTrust.

The "Case for Conserving Grasslands" submitted to the city last year and now on GN website and needs a "megaphone". Use it when it will be helpful for decision makers to choose conservation of prairie grasslands.

SPECIFICS:

Clean Up Campaigns.

The Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up will be upon us in September. GN usually participates, not always reporting. Check out the GCSC website; does someone want to register GN as participant in 2021? GN does a twice-annual garbage blitz. **Redcliff.** Paula Munro is beginning to grow interest in REDCLIFF for cleanup campaigns and supports her son's school in their environmental projects. Paula is also encouraging people to pick up after themselves with carefully worded notices taped to trash bins. **Adopt a Pond** volunteers are cleaning up their 21 specific areas every week or two. This includes most of the ponds and the entire length of the creek, through MH. Have you noticed the difference? Ger and John have been picking up trash every week all spring as a routine when flagging Eurasian buckthorn.

Invasive Species:

Workshops. Ger Ehlert is leading us forward and onward with two Invasive species workshops for pond adopters on Jun 26 and July 3 and 8 invasive species walks, two in each quadrant of the city. Phone the Nature Centre to register for any of these workshops.

Eurasian Buckthorn. John and Gerry have walked throughout the natural areas in the city and flagged Eurasian

buckthorn which the city will remove chemically. John and Gerry are also doing experimental plots in Police Point Park, removing buckthorn by "extractigator" or bark girdler.

Russian Olive. Marilou and her team have been removing Russian olive seedlings and saplings from Connaught pond. Joint GN/SEAWA Russian olive removal events have been held along the river near the TC Highway bridge (Harlow, last fall), and in Leinweber Park (This spring). The SEAWA website has a detailed article on Russian olive and how it is damaging the ecosystems in Southern Alberta.

Hoary Cress

Rabbit foot grass

Crested Wheat

Adopt a Pond volunteers are watching for invasives at edges of ponds and creek and reporting the presence using EDDMaps (Alberta) app on their phones to make it easy to ID and report invasives. Cathy Linowski is one of the members of the Archaeological Society who have adopted the area near the creek as it runs through the natural area below the teepee. Cathy reported the following: There are two invasives present primarily on the west side of Seven Persons Creek - *Lepidum draba* which goes by the name hoary cress was in full bloom. Quite attractive with its panicle of white flowers. Also saw *Lepidum draba* (rabbit foot grass) growing in the margins of the creek. It looks like someone has been doing some weed control as I saw dead patches and some very yellow/curly patches adjacent to the path. Another adopter, Amy Morras, wants to know if she can remove the crested wheat from the wetland that she visits every week or two (storm water collection area, but not a pond). I said yes but don't be disappointed when the rhizomes poke up new grass.

Wildflowers, Grass/Sedge, Moss

Wednesday Wildflower Walks, along with the wildflower brochure, provide an opportunity to learn and enjoy the wildflowers right in the middle of Medicine Hat. Grasses and sedges, moss and lichen are also attracting our attention. We are looking forward to a page in the June Chronicle about the wildflowers. Kelly Blair has agreed to do a page for the newsletter and we agreed that three or four times a year would be really good. John and Martha are toying with the idea of a grasses, sedge and moss brochure modeled after the wildflower brochure. 'Grasslands Naturalists' really should have something dedicated to ID of 'grasses'. Cathy and I both enjoy receiving the newsletter from the Edmonton Native Plant Society. We might explore possibilities for such a group here. Native plant rescue could be done by such a group, if not by GN. Also promotion of use of native plants in urban flower beds, on school, municipal, public health and church grounds.

Southern Alberta and Global Issues that affect us in a broad and profound way. These need more discussion and guidance. Does Nature Alberta assist?

Coal- Letter was sent by president Phil to Premier. Response was received.

Irrigation Expansion - refer to "Alberta Views" recent edition.

Climate Change. GN participation in "Climate Conversations". Ian Turner attended last one.

Loss of species

Locating and Designing Wind and Solar Power Farms so that land and species are priorities: Gerry & John.

Special Days: WWD, Earth Day, Environment Week etc.

Encouraging individual or household action on these days can be effective, is "pandemically safe", and light on administration. Websites for these days are useful and instructive. Suggest GN young adult and teens lead these under mentorship from us golden oldies.